



Provider Bulletin

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Health & Safety Executive - Risk of Falling from Windows

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Serious injuries and fatalities have occurred when people have fallen from or through windows in health and social care premises.

There are three broad categories of falls. These are:

Accidental – these are a minority, but occur where people unintentionally fall through or from windows. This can happen where people are able to sit on and fall from sills, or where windows are positioned such that people could easily fall through them.

Falls arising out of a confused mental state – a significant number of reports refer to the mental state of individuals. In particular, senility, dementia, reduced mental capacity, mental disorder and the effect of drink and drugs (both prescribed and illegal) can all cause anxiety and confusion. In these cases, people have often tried to escape or used a window, believing it to be an exit.

Deliberate self-harm or suicide –a recognised risk for people with certain health conditions, particularly those with a history of self-harm or mental disorder.

Health and social care providers must assess risks at their premises. Where assessment identifies the risk of falling against or through glazing, adequate precautions must be taken. These may include provision of suitable safety film, replacement with safety glass or provision of barriers. Glass doors and patio windows should also be fitted (in accordance with building regulations and British Standards) with toughened or safety glass or covered with a protective safety film.

Further information is available from the Health & Safety Executive Website:

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/healthservices/falls-windows.htm>

Any comments you have about these Bulletins (good or bad!) are welcome. Please contact: Q&MI, Room 234, Health & Adult Services, North Yorkshire County Council, County Hall Racecourse Lane Northallerton, DL7 8DD socialservices.contractingunit@northyorks.gov.uk Tel: 01609 797042